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CHICO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO UNLAWFUL FIREARM POSSESSION

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that JOSE ALEX VILLEGAS, 36, formerly of Chico, California, pled guilty to the crime of felon in possession of a firearm. VILLEGAS' guilty plea was entered this morning in Sacramento before United States District Judge Frank C. Damrell.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the Butte County Sheriff's Office, the Chico Police Department and the office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation located in Chico, California.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Rodriguez, who is prosecuting the case, VILLEGAS was previously convicted by the State of California of felony assault with a deadly weapon and felony drug distribution. Having suffered these prior felony convictions, VILLEGAS admitted today that on September 16, 2005 he possessed a loaded, stolen 9mm Smith and Wesson pistol, and a loaded Glock 9mm semiautomatic pistol. The two pistols were recovered upon his arrest during a public brawl.

VILLEGAS was remanded after entry of his guilty plea. His sentencing is scheduled for May 9, 2006. He faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and a three-year term of supervised release.

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